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Unite as One for the Program of
the New Higher Education and
Struggle for the Development of
Top Personnel for National Recon-
struction

Jen-min Chiao-yu (People's Education),
By Chien Tsun-shui, Peiping, 1 Dec 1950

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1 December 1950 PEOPLES EDUCATION ^{Peiping} ~~Beiping~~ - By Chien Tsun-shui

(This is a summary of the "conclusions" of the national conference on higher education held on 9 June 1950).

This article is divided into four sections dealing with (1) principles and program of higher education for the new China, (2) the central problem of linking theory with the practical in higher education, (3) principles and regulations governing private institutions of higher learning, (4) and an appeal for unity among educational workers in the interest of service to the people and national reconstruction.

The conference was fully aware that the major tasks facing the nation are the liberation of Formosa and the restoration of the peoples' economic foundation for national reconstruction. In view of these circumstances and in keeping with the over-all collective principles of the Peoples Political Consultative Conference, the meeting achieved a clearer understanding of the principles and objectives of the new higher education in China and tasks formulated for their achievement.

The major objective in higher education is to merge theory with practice and meet the immediate and long range needs and the direct and indirect requirements of economic, political, cultural and defense reconstruction. To achieve these objectives the task of higher education is to train and provide specialists and top technical personnel for reconstruction. Higher education cannot follow the theory of "education for education's sake."

Moreover high education ^{and} ~~strengthen~~ ^{must} the people's new-democratic government and open its doors to workers and farmers who must form a farm-labor alliance to serve as the foundation of a people's democratic government.

To achieve these purposes there must be a determined, orderly and cautious reform of the old higher education with respect to curricula, content, methods and organization. But the reform of the old education requires time and cannot be carried on impulsively, because it involves the reforming of "thought" which is a much more complicated struggle. At the same time the gradual development of the new mentality must reflect new economic and political developments and extend beyond changing historical conditions. Reform does not mean the complete abandonment of the old education; the rational parts of the old that are beneficial to the masses must be retained and the old methods and content that are opposed to the interests of the people eradicated. The reform of the subjective attitude of the old education must take place gradually because there are some who are not immediately receptive to change, and hasty action could be dangerously disruptive to the unity of the intellectual classes which is imperative for reform.

Following the principle of combining theory with the practical, all special schools, correspondence classes, training classes, and technical schools in higher education should be closely coordinated in the pattern of the People's University, the Northeast Medical School and the Northeast Labor Institute. There is much to learn from the experience of the USSR in this field. The manpower, property, facilities of the old education can be properly used to build the new education.

In accordance with these objectives and program of the new higher education, the conference agreed on (1) tentative regulations for

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- higher education and management methods for private higher education,
 (2) decided on reforms in the curriculum in higher institutions,
 (3) determined the importance of future leadership in higher education,
 (4) and discussed a preliminary draft curriculum.

II

The question most discussed and argued over during the conference was the principle of combining theory with the practical in higher education. The conference emphasized the importance of theory and opposed the tendencies of minimizing its significance. At the same time the conference opposed the narrow specialization and experimental education. Theory was emphasized not for its "mysterious nature," but for its practical guidance. Marxism-Leninism, as a theory, is studied for its practical purpose - not because it's a dogma. But it was emphasized that theory and the practical aspects of knowledge must be unified. It was pointed out the idea that natural science is superior to social science must be corrected. The foundation of theoretical scientific knowledge embraces both social and natural sciences. Technical personnel or specialists must be trained in both fields. The view of Lenin that education should give a person a world outlook, a grasp of modern scientific knowledge and a spirit of devotion and service to the people supports this position.

Natural and social sciences, according to Mao Tse-tung, are the crystallization of knowledge derived from production and knowledge derived from class and national struggle - these are only two forms of knowledge. Mao also said only true theory in this world is that which is derived objectively and from practical experience. Mao Tse-tung has referred to the statement by Stalin that theory divorced from practice is empty knowledge, useless, inaccurate, and should be wiped out.

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All higher institutions of learning must link theory with the practical. It is wrong to strengthen theory at the expense of separating it from the practical or to leave theory to the universities and specialization and practical knowledge to the special and technical schools. Even specialization requires theory; no science exists without theory. Finally scientific theory not only seeks to understand the world but must help change the world thru its control over nature and development of economic and cultural benefits for mankind. Social sciences are studied for a better understanding of the laws of world development in order to advance the revolutionary struggle and for political, economic and cultural reconstruction.

The pragmatic school of education, represented by William James and John Dewey, is based entirely on practical utility and is dogmatic and reactionary. This dogmatic education obstructs the coordination of theory with the practical and in so doing they deny truth and reject the interest of the people.

Great stress was given to the role of theory as a means to direct the class and national struggle and reconstruction and reference was made to Mao Tse-tung's description of "theory" as a scissor for cutting the pattern of China's revolution and reconstruction.

While higher education must meet the immediate needs of reconstruction it must not neglect its long-range objective. To meet the immediate needs of reconstruction, all departments of education and industries should coordinate their efforts toward the establishment of special and scientific schools, special refresher courses, correspondence classes, accelerated classes.

About 15 percent of the higher institutions are now following the new pattern. After following the pattern set by England and the USA for scores of years, no results were achieved. Bearing in mind the admonition of Sun Yat-sen and Mao Tse-tung, China should follow the

Russian path. The notion that only things Chinese are good must be eradicated and all subjects that are helpful to reconstruction should be studied regardless of their national origin. For this reason higher education should investigate Soviet textbooks and other educational materials.

III

In conformity with the principle of "mutual consideration of state and private interests" enunciated by Chou En-lai at the conference, the following action should be taken with respect to private institutions of higher learning, which represent 40 percent of 200 higher institutions:

- (1) Actively maintain private institutions in accordance with the financial abilities of the government. The few institutions established by and under the control of reactionary elements and those that are badly managed should be closed or merged with others.
- (2) Gradually reform private institutions and have them conform to the government's program and policy. There must be an active and orderly plan for reforming the educational system and internal conditions of private institutions. Professors in these institutions should coordinate their academic duties with patriotic services, study politics and concentrate on political revolutionary training of students.
- (3) Earmark special government funds for the support of private institutions that are in financial straits but essential for reconstruction.

Church-controlled institutions constitute only one percent of all higher institutions of learning. They must follow the government's program and policy, carry on scientific and mass education, practice the principles of nationalism, and eradicate all feudalistic, compradore and fascist forms of thought. They must voluntarily and actively train and develop personnel for reconstruction.

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Church-controlled institutions should actively oppose imperialist aggression and overcome the "compradore" mentality. They should especially oppose the USA which use these institutions to instigate plots against the government. Church and institutions should be separate. Students cannot be forced to believe in religion nor can they be forced to attend any religious classes. All religious instruction for students must be on a voluntary and elective basis.

Church-controlled institutions should obtain their support from the Chinese and in case they have ^{any} financial difficulties, the government will aid them under the principle of "mutual consideration of state and private interests."

There were strenuous debates and arguments during the conference and there is no use denying that the mentality and outlook of all educational workers reflect various class-viewpoints and represent the mentality of their particular social class. As yet there is no complete unity among the educational workers.

For the time being no decisions were taken on the content, method, and duration for such studies as ⁱⁿmedicine, agriculture, law, and philosophy. Arguments were heard and discussions will continue after the conference adjourns. Opposing views will be examined and studied objectively before a definite position crystallizes. This freedom of thought and discussion results in a better understanding of various subjects. But any contravention of the ideological viewpoint of the General Regulation must be corrected, because such contravention opposes the welfare of the Chinese people. Therefore those who advocate the traditional doctrinaire education and oppose reforms must be firmly opposed since ~~this contravenes~~ regulation #14 which specifically stipulates that "theory and practice" shall be the educational method in China and that the Peoples Democratic Government should have plans for the reform old educational system and its content and methods.

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Many educational workers practiced "self-criticism" at the conference and were courageous enough to admit and correct their past mistakes. Remnants of "old order" still exist in the educational departments of the government. Even in the educational activities of the central government there is insufficient leadership, planning and program. There must still be closer relationship between the government and the higher institutions.

The rebuilding of higher education is a complex and difficult task and financial difficulties must be surmounted. It is the hope of the conference that all educational administrative departments will carry out a "new thought movement" and thoroughly practice this in order to improve their work and strengthen the relationship of school and government. Educational workers should devote all their attention to their job and not try to carry on concurrent government positions after school hours.

Under the present financial circumstances the broad expansion of education cannot take place immediately, but as economic conditions improve there are great possibilities for the same type expansion that occurred in the Northeast. By following the principles and program of this conference, increasing the unity among the 10,000 educational workers in the higher institutions, and performing ^{our} ~~many~~ tasks in an orderly manner, we can overcome all difficulties.